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CASE STUDY

English Oak **Vineyard**

A blissful setting in the Dorset countryside, perfect for weddings, parties and business events, with clients including Tesla

Opening up their 23 acre vineyard as an events venue has proven the perfect diversification for this English sparkling wine producer. Husband and wife team Andrew and Sarah Pharoah avoid being 'Jack of all trades' by enlisting the help of venue management company Bellissimo Weddings so they can concentrate on making the best wine they can. We talk to Andrew.

When did you start your venue business?

English Oak Vineyard was created in 2007. My wife Sarah and I studied viticulture at Plumpton College while searching for a suitable farm on which to plant a vineyard. Having decided to create quality English sparkling wine, 23,000 of the three noble grape varieties, Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier and Chardonnay, were planted in our beautiful 23 acre site.

Committed to creating an environmentally sustainable, family business, with an emphasis on high quality over high volume production, we see English Oak as a leader in the production of delicious, high quality, award winning wine, produced with a commitment to minimum negative impact on the surrounding environment.

The electricity used in the business is generated through the use of solar panels which also power electric vehicles used for wine delivery, while natural well water and recycled spraying equipment is all part of our commitment to a green business model.

Tell us about your location and site

Our site is ideally situated just 10 minutes drive from the centre of Poole in the beautiful Dorset countryside. This makes it an easily accessed venue for visitors who come for vineyard tours and tastings, wedding receptions, private parties and business events. Surrounded by rolling hills and numerous noble oaks, the vineyard is a perfect bowl shape, ensuring an ideal microclimate for growing exceptional grapes.

The biggest challenge the site offers is how to make more local businesses and groups aware of the potential offered by a local venue that is the complete opposite of most humdrum alternatives.





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What facilities for outdoor functions do you offer?

English Oak offers fabulous marquee weddings within the vineyard along with a modern and well equipped visitors centre which offers local businesses and members groups an unusual venue for meetings, with the added option of wine tastings.

We welcome groups of up to 12 for boardroom style meetings where a truly alternative working environment is called for. We also offer modular sessions on leadership, management, planning, sales and many other inspirational business topics.

What services do you offer?

We offer visitors a wide range of services including vineyard tours, wine tastings, private parties, wedding receptions and a venue for corporate meetings and events. We frequently host hen and stag parties and private celebrations. The whole site is also available to hire for events such as product launches.





Corporate businesses, including Tesla cars, financial services providers and firms of solicitors, have used the venue to promote their products and services, safe in the knowledge that a vineyard visit is always an attractive proposition that will maximise attendance! We were delighted to host Tesla as it aligns perfectly with our sustainable, low carbon footprint ethos - our wine is delivered locally by electric vehicle

How do you work with your customers to make their events unique?

Visitors to English Oak enjoy the unique atmosphere of a vineyard environment along with the attention to detail we put into every event and activity. The number of wedding reception







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dates available is strictly limited to ensure every couple enjoys a unique, personal and exclusive experience. Wedding receptions benefit from a 'white canvas' possibility, where couples are free to create the perfect wedding reception of their choice, under the helpful guidance of our experienced wedding planning partners, Bellissimo Weddings.

How do you publicise yourself?

Because of the family run, boutique, 'to be discovered' nature of English Oak, the vineyard is not widely publicised. We prefer to rely extensively on word of mouth recommendations and the discovery and enjoyment of our sparkling wine in prestigious local hotels and restaurants, which inevitably leads to sales and bookings.

Our website, designed by CuCo Creative, features all of our 'destination' propositions, including weddings, parties and corporate events. In addition, we publicise our wedding venue through CoCo Wedding Venues - this site promotes a number of 'quality' venues and produces the number and quality of enquiries to meet our needs.

How would you describe your 'style' or USP?

Our style is best described as boutique, local, personal, sustainable and an exceptionally high quality venue and product.

What challenges have you faced?

The English climate represents the biggest challenge to a successful vineyard business in the UK, and indeed an outdoor events venue. With annual yields ranging from 80 tonnes to seven tonnes dependent upon the weather in any particular year, managing a vineyard business is not for the faint hearted! The venue side of the business offers an important revenue stream.





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What are your plans for next season?
English Oak plans to extend the services that it offers through the conversion of an on-site barn, which will allow for even larger groups of visitors.

Describe your average day mid-season
The average day mid-season at English Oak vineyard, comprises a busy combination of providing visitor tours along with hands-on, labour intensive work in the vineyard to deliver this year's optimum quality crop. Visitors will be mingling within the evocative rows of vines, with workers who might be seen tucking in the vine shoots to maintain a perfect canopy for growing quality grapes.

Do you work with any consultants?
To ensure we do not fall into the trap of 'Jack of all trades and master of none' we have been careful to collaborate with others where their specialist skills and experience complement and build upon our own. One such example is our relationship with Bellissimo Weddings, an exceptional wedding planning and venue management service provider.

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Melanie and Danielle manage all wedding enquiries received by English Oak, ensuring that in addition to a beautiful venue, couples receive the best advice to bring together their chosen suppliers and all those little details that together culminate in the perfect day. That leaves us free to ensure that the venue is looking perfect and allows us to get on with creating exceptional sparkling wine for that delicious wedding toast!

We believe in protecting the quality reputation of our wine and venue brand by, wherever possible, working with others who's skillsets complements our brand, rather that adopting a DIY approach that would in all likelihood dilute and tarnish our cherished reputation.

DETAILS

VENUE MANAGEMENT
Bellissimo Weddings
www.bellissimo-weddings.co.uk

MARQUEES
Abbas Marquees
www.abbasmarquees.co.uk

Haidmans Marquees
www.maidmansmarquees.com

Camelot Marquees
www.camelotmarquees.co.uk

FURNITURE
The White Chair Company
www.thewhitechaircompany.co.uk

TOILETS
Luxury Little Rooms
www.luxurylittlerooms.co.uk

REFRIGERATED TRAILERS
Arctic Refrigerated Trailers
www.arctic-trailers.co.uk

DIRECTORY SITES
CoCo Wedding Venues
www.cocoweddingvenues.co.uk

DETAILS
English Oak Vineyard
Flowers Drove
Lytchett Matravers
Poole BH16 6BX

01258 858 205
www.englishoakvineyard.com